



E-BULLETIN #60

"Let the holiness of God shine forth" (cf. Mt 5,16)

item 113

this parish has been anointed...

The past six weeks have been momentous ones in the life of the Church. For the Pallottines currently in the Argentine, and for all those who have worked there, the election of Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio as Pope on March 13th was a great joy. As Archbishop and later Cardinal he was known to all of us.

The presence of the Irish Province *Mother of Divine Love* in the Argentine dates back to 1886 when the first Pallottines went to Mercedes in the Province of Buenos Aires. The Province was entrusted with pastoral care of the parish of **San Patricio** in Belgrano in 1929. It is now a large and thriving city parish with an adjoining primary school which has 300 children on its roll book. A second Pallottine entity there, *Our Lady of Lujan* Region, is of German origin and dates back to the first missionary who came to the Argentine in 1925. It also has a parish, **Santa Isabel de Hungria**, in the Flores neighbourhood of Buenos Aires.

Fr Bergoglio was consecrated auxiliary bishop of Buenos Aires in 1992 and became Episcopal Vicar for the Vicariate of Flores. He was named coadjutor to the Archbishop in 1997, succeeded him in 1998 and became a Cardinal in February 2001. So not surprisingly Bishop Bergoglio had a good deal of pastoral contact with our communities. In 1997 he celebrated the annual 4th of July Anniversary Mass for our five confreres massacred on that day in 1976. In 2001 as Cardinal he again came to Belgrano to celebrate the 25th anniversary.

Together with the Argentine President he visited in 2006 for a prayer service to honour Martyrs for the Faith.



As a young student Bergoglio had studied in the Jesuit Colegio Maximo San Jose in San Miguel. Alfie Kelly of our Province, one of the 5 murdered in 1976, was also studying there and they became firm friends. His homily on July 4th 2001 was delivered without a text; however it was taped and transcribed:

O Just Father, the world does not know you. The world does not know God. The spirit of the world, this worldly spirit, did not accept the one sent by God: *'I know what I will do. I will send my son and see if they respect him'*... and they brought him outside of the vineyard and killed him.

And the world does not recognize, does not see...does not know those who follow the way of Jesus. It does not recognize the follower of Jesus as a brother and so destroys him. It stands before him as if he were an enemy: *'you are not my brother!'*

'And this will happen to you,' said Jesus, *'they will persecute you.. and happy are you when you are*

persecuted because of my name.. and you will be brought before tribunals and they will judge you and they will kill you out of hatred of my name.’ They will anoint you with your own blood.

To be a witness of Christ, to be a witness of the Gospel, is to take a road that one never knows where it will end. A road that is very clear: not to live for oneself. We have just heard it in Saint Paul: *‘no one lives for himself’* referring to those who want to follow Christ....When one dies, but not for oneself, then he germinates, grows, produces fruit; it becomes like a grain of wheat that falls into the earth.

This parish, and I repeat what I said four years ago, has been anointed by the testimony of those who ‘lived together and died together’ – by the testimony of those who did not wish to live for themselves, who wished to be the grain of wheat and who died so that others could have life.

When this parish was consecrated not only the altar was anointed...the very paving stones of this place are anointed with the blood of those who the world could not recognize because they were not of this world. The labels came afterwards. They placed on them all the labels possible, the labels that the world applies in order to justify itself. *“Crucify him! Because he says he is the Son of God”*: The first label they applied to him and as it was placed on Him, so has it has been put on all those who throughout history have wished to follow his way. When the world does not want to accept responsibility for the evidence it invents labels....Labels that at times are attitudes, at other times they are decisions and at times are positions taken. The world always justifies itself for not accepting responsibility for that which it fails to recognize, for not accepting responsibility for arriving late, for not opening its heart on time.

This parish which has been anointed by the decision of those who lived together, anointed by the blood of those who died together, says something to this city, something that each one has to receive in his heart and accept responsibility for. It is the removing of and the clearing up of the labels so as to look at the evidence. There are people who are still witnesses to the Gospel, people who have been a grain of wheat, who gave their lives and this gave new life.

I am a witness of what Alfie Kelly’s life was like, because I accompanied him in confession and spiritual direction until his death. He thought only of God. I name him because I am a witness to his heart, but in naming him I also witness to all the others. I simply pray for the grace of having a memory, a memory that makes us hang our heads and ask for pardon, using the words of Jesus, *“they do not know what they are doing”*, for those who rent apart this city with this incident... and I wish to give thanks to God because still today, in the midst of this turbulent city, full of life, full of anxiety, full of strength, full of hope, full of problems, full of work, he wished to give us a sign. There are still people who do not wish to live for themselves. And.. die not for themselves but in order to give life to another. We celebrate the Eucharist in this sentiment.

Strong words, and strong sentiments. As Bishop his pastoral care has always been characterized by attentiveness to persons and a personal care and concern for the priests of the Archdiocese – on one occasion he is said to have affirmed *“the priests are my parish”*, with the understanding that if the priests are cared for and supported pastorally by their Bishop they will, in turn, care for those entrusted to their pastoral care. His visits to the slums, to prisons, hospitals and hospices are all documented; he is ‘a priest of the people and for the people’.

Pope Francis is a man of deep personal faith, with a mind, heart and spirit anchored in God and single-heartedly committed to living the Gospel and this will guide him as he attends to the needs of the Church. With a spirit of expectation I now await the charisms which will emerge, and I pray that the Holy Spirit will continue to surprise and inspire us.

Derry Murphy sac – IR – Dublin – IRELAND
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motherofdivinelove@gmail.com

...and I experienced the paradox...

I was there, with Peter, James and John,
Asleep, unconscious, unaware.
While on the rock you shed tears of blood.
I didn't see you take the cup in feeble hands;
I didn't know you in the loneliness
Of those about me crying for my presence,
Needing a smile, a handclap.

My eyes were heavy with sleep and selfishness,
And so your agony, the human pain,
The anguish passed me by,
Until you came, took me by the hand and said:
'Could you not watch one hour with me?'
'Me, Lord, to comfort you?
What must I do?'
And you replied, 'Just be.'
'But Lord, I can't, I'm afraid of the darkness!'
'Come,' you said, 'Taste of my cup.'
And the taste was bitter-sweet.

Then Judas came with clubs
And flickering torches.
My heart cried, 'No! It must not be.'
But you said, 'I am he. Let the others go.'
Simon, grown brave, brandished his sword
To some effect on Malchus' ear.
'I must drink the cup, the Father wills it.'
And I, I ran with pounding heart,
Blood drumming in my ears, I fled
For fear they'd take me instead.



And so to Ananias and to Caiphas.
Peter and John followed.
That shivering heap in the dark corner,
Who is it Lord? There's something familiar.
Peter stood near the fire, but that cringing
Fear crazed creature, there in the darkness?
Ah, yes, that's me, still afraid of the dark,
Not yet able to say. 'I will.'

They took you then to Pilate.
Poor Pilate. Unwilling to be involved.
Desperately trying to release you,
Yet driven by the implacable hatred
Of those who brought you to him.
He ordered the scourging;
And the whips battered and bruised
Until your body was a broken bleeding thing,
A worm and no man.
They crowned your head with thorns,

Bent the knee in mockery.
And I still shivered and cringed in the darkness.



Daylight came, but for you no respite.
'Crucify him' howled the mob.
And Pilate handed you over
To be crucified.
On your bruised and bleeding shoulder
They thrust the heavy beam,
And you went out to the place of the skull,
Carrying the cross.
Upon the tree they lifted you up.
The soldiers threw dice
For your seamless robe.
Bystanders shouted insults.
Others walked by uncaring.

There stood your mother and the faithful few
Suffering with you.
But you, you were alone, abandoned
Even by your Father.
And I stood a long way off and prayed
For the courage to come closer
To be involved, to shake off my shivering fear
Of the darkness.

The sun grew dim,
Darkness covered the land.
And you breathed your spirit
Into the Father's keeping.
I fell upon my face and wept
Disconsolate that you should go alone.

The darkness closed around me
And I experienced the paradox
And I knew I need never fear the darkness again.
For you are there in the darkness,
Lifted up, upon your Cross.

**from the book of poems: "Beauty is in the Eye of the Beholder"
by Sr Mary Jo Wells rsj**

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**art work from 'Stations of the Cross'
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Daly River Northern Territory 0822
Australia